
1997 SUN VALLEY FORUM ON NATIONAL HEALTH

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About the Sun Valley Forum

The Forum was the brainchild of W. Averell Harriman, Margaret Mahoney, Bayless Manning and others, who incorporated it in 1970. It was and is a nonprofit organization whose paramount purpose is to pursue educational activities concerning the health of Americans and the nation's health care system. The Forum convenes highly interactive symposia, at which about 30 scholars, clinicians, policymakers, philanthropists, scientists, and other experts examine emerging health policy issues. Particularly in the early years, each Forum represented a rare opportunity for sophisticated discussion of significant health policy issues at the national level. Even as other health policy groups and institutes have appeared, the Sun Valley Forum remains one of the oldest and most respected such entities.

The first Sun Valley Forum, held in Idaho in June 1971, explored the nation's health care financing and delivery mechanisms. Based on the commissioned papers of seven leading experts, the 24 Forum participants produced the Report of Symposium on Personal Health Care and Financing, which included their assessment of the major characteristics of health care in the U.S., the goals of and criteria for a health care system, and problems and solutions for a health care system. Subsequent summer meetings treated the delivery system (1972), primary care (1973), Canada's health care system (1974), and the role of foreign medical graduates (January 1975). Additional Forums dealt with health services for children (1975) and medical technology (1977). In the 1980s, the Sun Valley Forum continued to explore critical aspects of financing and also examined the nation's shifting demographics.

In the 1990s, as the nation began to recognize more fully its systemic health care problems, and began to explore national solutions, the Sun Valley Forum remained at the center of the scholarly debate. The 1992 Forum, "Rebalancing the Triad: Cure, Care and Prevention," concentrated on the interrelationships between and the roles of acute care, long-term care, and public health within the context of health care reform. The 1994 Sun Valley Forum examined the role of urban universities, both as educators of future health professionals (with particular emphasis on schools of public health) and in the health of residents of their surrounding communities.

At its last meeting, the board elected M. Roy Schwarz, M.D., president of the China Medical Board, to lead the Sun Valley Forum.